

# Common Goals Collective Action

REPORT 2025



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\*Dr. Chu passed away in November 2025. The remainder of his term will be served by Gary K. Schwartz, MD, director of Case Comprehensive Cancer Center. Please read our tribute on page 25.

## AACI Leadership

### OFFICERS

- President**  
**Robert A. Winn, MD**  
VCU Massey  
Comprehensive Cancer Center
- Immediate Past President**  
**Caryn Lerman, PhD**  
USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center
- Vice President/President-elect**  
**Joann B. Sweasy, PhD**  
Fred & Pamela Buffett  
Cancer Center
- Treasurer**  
**David Gosky, MA, MBA**  
The Ohio State University  
Comprehensive Cancer Center -  
The James
- Executive Director**  
**Jennifer W. Pegher, MA, MBA**  
Association of American Cancer Institutes

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Edward Chu, MD, MMS\***  
Montefiore Einstein  
Comprehensive Cancer Center
- Raymond Dubois, MD, PhD**  
Hollings Cancer Center  
University of South Carolina

**Bernard Mark Evers, MD, FACS**  
UK Markey Cancer Center

**Steven D. Leach, MD**  
Dartmouth Cancer Center  
Dartmouth College

**Kelvin Lee, MD**  
Indiana University Melvin and Bren Simon  
Comprehensive Cancer Center

**Kunle Odunsi, MD, PhD**  
The University of Chicago Medicine  
Comprehensive Cancer Center

**Suresh Ramalingam, MD**  
Winship Cancer Institute of  
Emory University

**Yolanda Sanchez, PhD**  
University of New Mexico  
Comprehensive Cancer Center

### NEW BOARD MEMBERS

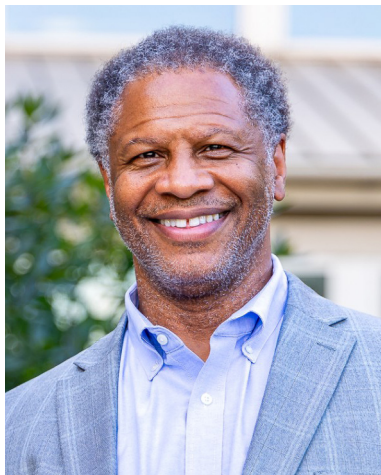
**Diane M. Simeone, MD**  
UC San Diego Moores  
Cancer Center

**Barry P. Sleckman, MD, PhD**  
O'Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center at  
the University of Alabama at Birmingham



AACI cancer center directors joined forces at the 2025 AACI/CCAF Annual Meeting.

# A Message From AACI



Dr. Robert A. Winn  
AACI President



Jennifer W. Pegher  
AACI Executive Director

If it's true that "life is what happens when you're busy making other plans," then 2025 was the liveliest year in recent memory for AACI.

Significant shifts in the public policy landscape posed unprecedented challenges that required nimble responses from AACI. Throughout the year, we redirected resources to support our members amid uncertainty and upheaval.

As **Dr. Robert A. Winn**, director of VCU Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center, entered his final year as AACI president, he refocused his Inclusive Excellence Initiative in response to AACI member needs. Activities throughout the year included focus groups on cancer centers' global oncology programs and the introduction of Cancer Center Director Town Halls. The town hall meetings were held virtually twice a month as a forum for cancer center leaders to discuss changes in leadership at the National Institutes of Health and National Cancer Institute, new government policies, and federal funding for cancer research.

To keep AACI members apprised of these changes and amplify stories about the impact of cancer research, AACI launched the *Defending Cancer Research Digest*. The digest served as a complement to the monthly AACI *Update* newsletter, with a focus on local and national media coverage of recent federal policy changes and their effects on patients with cancer. AACI spoke out on behalf of the cancer center community through its *Commentary* editorial series, official policy statements, and social media.

Though the public policy landscape was somewhat unpredictable in 2025, AACI continued to build and nurture relationships with members of Congress through in-person meetings, letter campaigns, and personalized outreach.

We are deeply grateful to these congressional champions for their continued advocacy and support of cancer centers and biomedical research.

AACI continues to provide educational and networking opportunities to members through a robust calendar of events, including our flagship Clinical Research Innovation (CRI) and AACI/CCAF annual meetings, Catchment Area Data Excellence (CADEx) Conference, and Leadership Development Workshop. Preceding the 2025 AACI/CCAF Annual Meeting, AACI hosted a meeting for new cancer center directors and partnered with the American Cancer Society and the Cancer Center Network to host the Impact Summit.

Listserv discussions, webinars, and member surveys offered additional opportunities for professional growth. A partnership with Medlive enhanced our capacity to deliver high-quality educational content; thanks to this successful collaboration, AACI will now host its free webinars on the Medlive platform.

Though the past year has shown that the best laid plans can change at a moment's notice, it also strengthened AACI's ability to mobilize collective action. Looking ahead to 2026, we are excited to bring fresh perspectives to our programming, informed by our members' interests and priorities. As **Dr. Joann B. Sweasy**, director of Fred & Pamela Buffett Cancer Center, begins her first full year as AACI president, she will roll out a new presidential initiative dedicated to improving cancer outcomes in rural and frontier areas.

The cancer center community demonstrated remarkable strength and resilience in 2025, proving that working together is key to achieving our common goals. Thank you for all you do for patients and their loved ones. We are proud to be part of your community and look forward to collaborating with you in 2026.



# Common Goals, Collective Action



**T**his past year posed unprecedented challenges for AACI and its members. Significant shifts in the public policy landscape required a nimble and energetic response from AACI — and we passed the test, redirecting resources to deliver more value to our members.

The benefits of AACI membership are institutional – that means they're available to all faculty and staff of your cancer center. Please take some time to explore the 2026 membership benefits below and discover how AACI is enhancing the impact of academic cancer centers.

Thank you for all you do for patients, their families, and your communities. AACI is proud to be part of a strong, resilient cancer center community. We look forward to collaborating with you in 2026 to advance our common goals.

## AACI MEMBER BENEFITS

### Member Services, Communication & Education

Keep up with the oncology ecosystem

#### Job Listings and Meeting Announcements

- exclusive to AACI member centers

**Surveys** – 4 in 2025: non-malignant clinical trials using immune effector cell therapy; CTO benchmarking; compensation; state funding  
**AACI Commentary** – monthly editorial series

**AACI Update** – monthly newsletter

**Webinars** – 6 in 2025

**Listserve** – nearly 2,000 participants in 8 different focus areas

**Monthly roundtables** – inform development of meeting programs, survey content, and job roles and responsibilities

### Programs & Initiatives

Improve cancer center operations

**Catchment Area Research and Data Science**

**Cellular Therapy Initiative**

**Clinical Research Innovation**

**Physician Clinical Leadership Initiative**

**AACI Presidential Initiatives:**  
**Inclusive Excellence** (including global oncology and cancer center director town halls) and **Rural Cancer Health**

Ongoing projects include benchmarking across cancer centers and departments, enhancing catchment area data monitoring, standardizing education, expanding clinical trial access, evaluating protected academic time and efficiencies, and strengthening collaborations with sustaining partners.

### Meetings

Connect with colleagues

**AACI Catchment Area Data Excellence (CADEx) Conference**

March 9-11, Atlanta, GA

**18th Annual AACI Clinical Research Innovation (CRI) Meeting**

June 23-25, Rosemont, IL

**AACI/CCAF Annual Meeting and concurrent meetings**

October 24-27, Chicago, IL

**Concurrent meetings: Leadership Development Workshop; New Cancer Center Directors Meeting; Impact Summit** (in partnership with American Cancer Society and the Cancer Center Network)

### Public Policy

Support cancer-focused legislation

**AACI/AACR Hill Day**

May 14, Washington, DC

**Public Policy Resource Library Legislation Tracker**

**Visits with legislators and agency officials**

**Government Relations Forum meetings**

**Monthly update calls**



At left, Dr. AnaMaría López speaks at the Impact Summit; at right, AACI roundtable sessions encourage in-person interaction.



# Public Policy

Like our cancer center members, AACI was compelled to redirect time and other resources in response to significant shifts in the public policy landscape this year.

With AACI coordinating over 200 meetings on Capitol Hill, our outreach to Members of Congress and federal agencies was our greatest advocacy strength in 2025. Many of the meetings were led by AACI President **Dr. Robert A. Winn**, who repeatedly prioritized trips to Washington, DC, on behalf of AACI members.

In May, Dr. Winn and AACI Executive Director **Jennifer W. Pegher** met with the teams of **House Leader Steve Scalise (R-LA)**; **Speaker of the House Mike Johnson (R-LA)**; **Senate Appropriations Chair Susan Collins (R-ME)**; and **Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS)**.

In addition, **Dr. Hannah Hazard-Jenkins**, director of WVU Cancer Institute, joined AACI in a conversation with **Sen. Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV)**.

Also in May, AACI Past President **Dr. Roy A. Jensen** and AACI staff joined lobbying firm EFB Advocacy in a meeting with the chief of staff for **Representative Tom Cole (R-OK)**. Later in the year, a small group of cancer center directors and AACI leadership met with the Center for Scientific Review.

In September, Dr. Winn was the keynote speaker for a Business for Federal Research Funding Roundtable, and he and AACI staff participated in meetings led by Pennsylvania Chamber of Commerce chapters on the importance of research funding for local economies. The month also saw AACI staff lead advocates in meetings during the Rally for Medical Research.

**With AACI coordinating over 200 meetings on Capitol Hill, our outreach to Members of Congress and federal agencies was our greatest advocacy strength in 2025.**



AACI and the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) co-hosted a congressional briefing on Capitol Hill. Florida Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz (standing, center) met with panelists (L-R): Dr. Robert A. Winn, Dr. Roy S. Herbst, Meghan Lowell, Vanessa Brandon, and Dr. John D. Carpten.

# Public Policy



## AACI/AACR Hill Day

AACI's 2025 Hill Day, co-hosted with the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR), drew more than 160 participants from 34 states — a significant increase compared to the previous year.

Hill Day events included a briefing at the U.S. Capitol Visitor Center, moderated by Dr. Winn with remarks by **Representative Deborah Wasserman Schultz (D-FL)**, **Drs. Roy Herbst and John Carpten**, and two cancer survivors. AACI and AACR also hosted 14 cancer survivor advocates who underscored the importance of continued funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and National Cancer Institute (NCI).

At a reception the night before Hill Day, AACI presented its Cancer Research Ally Award to **Rep. Jamie Raskin (D-MD)** and **Senator Susan Collins (R-ME)**. In addition to AACI's ramped-up efforts in Washington, AACI continued its standard government relations activities, including monthly update calls for cancer centers and numerous advocacy letters on cancer-related policy issues.



Letters were sent to:

- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary **Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.**, regarding the impact of cuts to medical research funding and the overall importance of cancer research
- NIH Director **Dr. Jay Bhattacharya**, signed by cancer center directors, regarding a proposal to move grant reviews to the Center for Scientific Review
- Republican Members of Congress, thanking them for signing a letter to the Office of Management and Budget urging timely and full disbursement of Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 appropriations for NIH
- **Senators Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV)** and **Tammy Baldwin (D-WI)**, thanking them for their support for NIH and NCI in the FY2026 Labor-HHS appropriations bill

AACI's main public policy focus continues to be strong federal funding for the NIH and the NCI. Work in 2025 included urging Congress to pass a robust FY2026 budget. In FY2025, NIH was funded at \$46.8 billion, a slight decline in support, and NCI was at \$7.22 billion, essentially flat.

New in 2025 was a "Congressional Connection" shared spreadsheet containing information on all 535 members of Congress, documenting their personal connections to cancer, committee assignments, and cancer advocacy history. AACI welcomes your advocacy ideas, and we encourage you to visit our Public Policy Resource Library to review legislative efforts that benefit cancer centers.

*Pictured top to bottom, left to right: AACI President Dr. Robert A. Winn and AACI Executive Director Jennifer W. Pegher; AACI Government Relations Steering Committee Chair Matthew Swaback and Vice Chair Catherine Liao; Jake Jackson and Jamie Wilson, Moffitt Cancer Center.*





Ross A. Frommer, Columbia University Irving Medical Center, speaks at an AACI government relations forum (below).





# Presidential Initiatives



## Inclusive Excellence

For his Inclusive Excellence Initiative, AACI President **Dr. Robert A. Winn** focused on ways in which AACI members can foster and strengthen partnerships with other institutions and organizations regionally, nationally, and globally.

The initiative comprised five primary elements:

- Emerging and community cancer centers; Historically Black Colleges and Universities; Hispanic-Serving Institutions; and Minority-Serving Institutions
- Global Oncology
- Patient Navigation
- Enhanced partnerships
- Local, community initiatives

To address ongoing concerns and provide an open forum for directors, the initiative introduced AACI Cancer Center Director Town Hall Meetings in 2025. The meetings featured National Cancer Institute (NCI) personnel who provided updates and answered questions. Other guests included leaders from like-minded organizations and cancer advocates.

Participation was nearly evenly split by region of the country, with 92 cancer center directors, representing roughly 82 percent of AACI's members, joining the discussions.

The 2025 AACI/CCAF Annual Meeting featured a discussion on global oncology. Moderator **Dr. Patrick J. Loehrer** and panelists **Drs. Julie Gralow, Kunle Odunsi, and Katherine Van Loon** shared the progress of the AACI Global Oncology Working Group, highlighting ways for cancer centers to build bidirectional, collaborative relationships to enact meaningful change on a global scale.

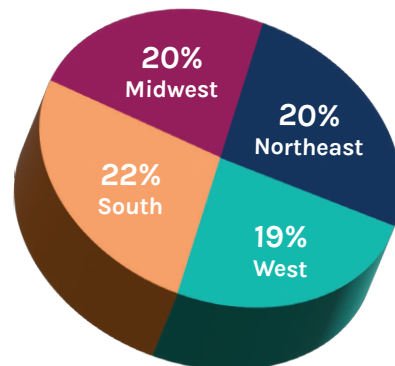
Working group members include **Dr. Satish Gopal**, of the NCI Center for Global Health, and representatives from the United States, Kenya and Mexico. They oversee six focus groups:

- Global oncology program leaders
- Low- and Middle-Income Countries leaders and partners
- Partnership organizations
- Industry partners
- Trainees
- Cancer center directors

## AACI Cancer Center Director Town Hall Meetings

**92 CANCER CENTERS REPRESENTED**

Participation by Region



## Rural Cancer Health Initiative



**RURAL  
CANCER  
HEALTH  
INITIATIVE**

**Dr. Joann B. Sweasy's** forthcoming Rural Cancer Health Initiative aims to identify best practices for improving cancer outcomes among rural populations.

In a presentation during the 2025 AACI/CCAF Annual Meeting, Dr. Sweasy noted that geography is an

often overlooked social determinant of health and individuals living in rural areas—roughly 14-20 percent of the United States population—generally experience higher rates of morbidity and mortality from cancer.



# Meetings



## Leadership Development Workshop

The 2025 AACI Leadership Development Workshop, held in March, drew nearly 100 attendees, with 82 cancer centers represented. Attendees reflected the deep pool of talented emerging leaders at AACI cancer centers who are accelerating progress against cancer.

Keynote talks were delivered by **Dr. Karen Winkfield**, executive director, Meharry-Vanderbilt Alliance, and **Dr. Ted A. James**, cancer center medical director, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Harvard Medical School. Dr. Winkfield spoke about the importance of crafting a career path that complements a person's life goals. Dr. James's talk, titled "Inclusive Team Building: Strategies for Cancer Center Leadership Excellence," considered ways to transform health care by promoting patient-centered care and fostering positive workplace culture.

The meeting's panel discussions included insights on navigating the pathway to cancer center leadership, with **Dr. Brian Gonzalez**, Moffitt Cancer Center; **Dr. Wendy Law**, Fred Hutch Cancer Center; **Dr. Yolanda Sanchez**, director and CEO of the University of New Mexico Comprehensive Cancer Center; and **Dr. Tammara Watts**, Duke Cancer Institute.

## Impact Summit

Co-hosted by AACI, American Cancer Society, and the Cancer Center Network, the Impact Summit gathered cancer center leaders, researchers, and key stakeholders for a dynamic event focused on strengthening the future of cancer center leadership and workforce development. More than 100 registrants from 72 AACI cancer centers attended the summit, which was held in conjunction with the AACI/CCAF annual meeting.

Sessions addressed how national organizations are shaping the biomedical workforce; developing the next generation of cancer center faculty; and faculty recruitment and retention.

In closing remarks, **Dr. Wendy Law**, Fred Hutch Cancer Center, urged attendees to take action after the meeting, perhaps by reaching out to a potential collaborator, launching a mentorship initiative, or simply taking new perspectives back to their centers. She noted that small steps, multiplied many times, become real change.



At left, Dr. Brian Gonzalez, AACI Leadership Development Workshop committee chair, talks about cancer center leadership; at right, roundtable discussions facilitate networking at AACI meetings.

“Small steps, multiplied many times, become real change.”

— Dr. Wendy Law  
Fred Hutch Cancer Center

# Meetings

## 17<sup>th</sup> Annual AACI CRI Meeting

With the theme of *Driving Solutions Together*, the 17th Annual AACI CRI Meeting, held in June, drew over 600 registrants, including 578 in-person attendees.

CRI Steering Committee Chair **Dr. Thomas J. George**, of UF Health Cancer Institute, welcomed attendees and introduced keynote speaker, **Loriana Hernández-Aldama**, a two-time cancer survivor and founder of ArmorUp for LIFE®. Hernández-Aldama challenged the audience to recognize that every data point has a face, a family, and a future.

Panel discussions looked at the restructuring of the National Cancer Institute's (NCI) Cancer Center Support Grant (CCSG) submission and review processes; shaping career paths in oncology; and clinical trial portfolio management.

CRI Steering Committee Chair-elect **Dr. Margaret “Margie” Kasner**, of Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center at Jefferson, moderated a session on navigating investigator-initiated trials. Another session featured four AACI Corporate Roundtable members sharing how corporate partnerships can align with cancer center initiatives to improve clinical trials.

The 17th Annual AACI CRI Meeting featured informative panel discussions, engaging roundtable conversations, and valuable networking opportunities.







Vanessa Williams, Indiana University Melvin and Bren Simon Comprehensive Cancer Center, explains her team's research.

“Your work doesn’t just move science forward; it moves lives forward. You’re restoring hope to all patients – one protocol, one patient, one life at a time.”

— Loriana Hernández-Aldama

## Abstract and Poster Presentation

The 17th Annual AACI CRI Meeting generated 157 abstract submissions featuring research focused on cancer clinical trials. Three winning abstracts were selected.

They were presented by **Kristina Humphries**, The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center - The James; **Dr. J. Kaitlin Morrison**, UNC Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; and **Lauren Wall**, The University of Chicago Medicine Comprehensive Cancer Center.

## Abstract Winners

### FIRST PLACE:

**Improving Data Timeliness by Developing a CTO Process and Shifting Cultural Expectations**

K. Humphries, C. Schweitzer, M. Wyse Bernard, J. Paskett, A. Campbell

The Ohio State University  
Comprehensive Cancer Center - The James

### SECOND PLACE:

**Hybrid Operations to Promote Equity (HOPE) - Bringing Trials Closer to Patients**

K. Morrison, J. Potter, E. Moore, S. Wheeler, B. Martin, C. Lee

UNC Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

### THIRD PLACE:

**Measuring the Impact of Multiple Strategies to Increase Enrollment in Molecular Targeted Trials**

L. Wall, V. Seseri, K. Kipping-Johnson, K. Cabrera, A. Larkin, S. Moellering

The University of Chicago Medicine  
Comprehensive Cancer Center



Winning abstract presenters (L-R): Dr. J. Kaitlin Morrison, Kristina Humphries and Lauren Wall.

# Meetings



Annual meeting keynote speaker Chris Draft urged a team approach to advance cancer research

## 2025 AACI/CCAF Annual Meeting

In a year that repeatedly tested the resolve of cancer center leaders, researchers, and staff as they absorbed mixed signals from Washington and uncertainty about the future of federal funding, nearly 400 cancer center directors and administrators, representing 95 AACI member cancer centers, gathered in the nation's capital for the 2025 AACI/CCAF Annual Meeting.

The annual meeting commenced with a comprehensive update of AACI's programs, initiatives, and finances, with outgoing President **Dr. Robert A. Winn** urging attendees to take action. Taking inspiration from a quote attributed to iconic reggae artist Bob Marley, Dr. Winn said, "Our communities, families, future leaders, and future scientists are depending on us to be strong – at this point, it is our only choice."

Former, current, and future AACI presidents put many of today's challenges in perspective, describing how cancer centers have coped with economic recessions, federal funding cuts, and other crises. The discussion was co-moderated by **Drs. Joann B. Sweasy** and **Robert A. Winn** with panelists **Drs. H. Shelton Earp, Roy A. Jensen, Michelle Le Beau, and George J. Weiner**. They stressed the value of educating local and national legislators and forging partnerships with other cancer centers and organizations in their communities. The conversation highlighted decades of progress in cancer research and the panelists' unwavering dedication to eradicating cancer. "No one here has a job," Dr. Jensen said. "We have a mission."

Keynote speaker **Chris Draft**, a lung cancer advocate and former NFL linebacker, challenged attendees to make sure that the general public and elected officials know that research matters, and to tackle that task as "one team" with "one fight," not as individual cancer leaders or organizations.

The program also included a Q&A with Dr. Winn, AACI Executive Director **Jennifer W. Pegher**, and **Katie Brown**, legislative director and chief counsel for **Senator Susan Collins (R-ME)**. Brown shared insights into the government shutdown, the implications for funding priorities and federal operations, and potential paths forward. The Q&A was followed by a conversation about the intersection of medicine, politics, and media, featuring **Paul Goldberg**, editor of *The Cancer Letter*; **Laurie McGinley**, a board member for the recently established Patient Action for Cancer Research and a journalist who covered health care policy for *The Washington Post*; and **Dr. George J. Weiner**, director emeritus of Holden Comprehensive Cancer Center, University of Iowa.

Due to the government shutdown, speakers from the National Cancer Institute (NCI) were unable to participate in the meeting, and an October 22 retreat for directors of NCI-Designated Cancer Centers was canceled. Fortunately, AACI responded quickly to fill the gap and hosted a two-hour meeting for cancer center directors after the sessions concluded.

**The 2026 AACI/CCAF Annual Meeting is set for October 25-27 at the Marriott Chicago Downtown Magnificent Mile. The 2026 Impact Summit, Leadership Development Workshop, and New Cancer Center Directors Meeting will run concurrently at the same location on October 24.**

“If research matters, it’s not just about the people doing the research, but about the people who benefit from it.”

— Keynote speaker Chris Draft



## 2025 AACI Catchment Area Data Excellence (CADEX) Conference

The 2025 AACI CADEX Conference convened in January in Coronado, CA. Participants included cancer center catchment area data scientists, geospatial statisticians, and other experts, who addressed emerging topics in cancer prevention and control analytics.

The conference opened with a keynote by **Dr. Jeremy Warner**, “A Brief History of EHRs and the Importance of Interoperability,” supported by **Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center, UT Southwestern Medical Center**. His presentation included a historical overview of health records and mapped out their possible evolution, highlighting the importance of interoperability in health care.

Panel discussion topics covered geospatial tools, catchment area surveillance, and other aspects of data gathering, analysis, and dissemination.

Abstract presentations were supported by **Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center at Jefferson**. The winning abstracts selected for formal presentation at the meeting were:

**FIRST PLACE:**  
**Using Health System Population Health Data to Support Community-Engaged Cancer Health Equity Initiatives: A Pilot Project**  
*Dartmouth Cancer Center*

**SECOND PLACE:**  
**Leveraging Geospatial Data to Support an Implementation Science Approach to Address Lung Cancer Burden**  
*Fox Chase Cancer Center, Temple Health*

**THIRD PLACE:**  
**GIS Automated Delineation of Cancer Service Areas: Implications for Cancer Control in the U.S.**  
*University of Alabama*

Top: Dr. Felicity Enders, Mayo Clinic Comprehensive Cancer Center, participates in the Impact Summit. Bottom (L-R): CADEX panelists Drs. Todd Burus, Namoonga Mantina, and Lisa Spees.



For the third consecutive year, AACI hosted a new cohort of cancer center directors at the 2025 AACI/CCAF Annual Meeting, helping them enhance their professional networks as they adjust to their leadership roles.

## New Cancer Center Directors Meeting

In a separate meeting the day before the 2025 AACI/CCAF Annual Meeting, an intimate group of new cancer center directors and directors emeriti engaged in an open dialogue on various facets of cancer center operations. The program featured a series of panel discussions to prepare the new directors for their leadership roles, with experienced directors offering their perspectives on challenges—and opportunities—that all centers face.

A closing session, shared with the Impact Summit, highlighted the power of collaboration to drive progress. Panelists were former NCI Director **Dr. W. Kimryn Rathmell**, AACI President **Dr. Robert A. Winn**, and cancer center directors **Dr. John D. Carpten**, City of Hope Comprehensive Cancer Center, and **Dr. Yolanda Sanchez**, University of New Mexico Comprehensive Cancer Center. **Dr. Wendy Law** moderated.

# Awards



Dr. Thomas F. Gajewski accepts the Distinguished Scientist Award from Dr. Eileen Dolan.



Dr. Robert A. Winn (left) presents the Cancer Health Equity Award to Dr. John D. Carpten.



Dr. Candace Johnson (right) presents the Champion for Cures Award to 11 Day Power Play co-founder Amy Lesakowski (center) and her daughter, Julia Lesakowski (left).

The 2025 AACI/CCAF Annual Meeting featured award presentations recognizing excellence in scientific achievement, health equity, cancer-focused philanthropy, and public service. The awards ceremonies allowed AACI members to express their gratitude for their peers in the cancer center community and for cancer research advocates. With cancer research funding and health equity initiatives under threat, the 2025 awards held special significance.

**The 2025 Distinguished Scientist Award** was presented to **Dr. Thomas F. Gajewski**, The University of Chicago Medicine Comprehensive Cancer Center. Dr. Gajewski expressed gratitude for being recognized by his peers before highlighting his work in developing immunotherapies to treat melanoma and other cancers.

**Dr. John D. Carpten**, director of the City of Hope Comprehensive Cancer Center, received the **2025 AACI Cancer Health Equity Award**. The award was presented by Dr. Robert A. Winn in honor of Dr. Carpten's pioneering research in genome science and health disparities and his deep commitment to justice, representation, and opportunity in medicine and science.

**Dr. Candace Johnson**, president and CEO of Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center, presented the **2025 Champion for Cures Award** to the 11 Day Power Play, an organization that has contributed more than \$7 million to research and wellness programs at the cancer center and supports other cancer programs in and around Buffalo, NY.





L-R: Dr. Lei Zheng, AACI Public Service Award recipient  
Rep. Joaquin Castro, and Dr. Robert A. Winn.



Sen. Katie Britt accepts the AACI Public Service Award  
from Dr. Barry P. Sleckman.



# New Cancer Center Members

## Tampa General Hospital Cancer Institute

AACI is pleased to add Tampa General Hospital Cancer Institute (TGHCI) to its membership roster. Established in 2021, TGHCI is the result of the strategic and synergistic partnership in cancer care and research between Tampa General Hospital, a 991-bed, nonprofit, academic health system, and the University of South Florida (USF) Health Morsani College of Medicine. USF is a high-impact research university dedicated to community engagement that generates hundreds of millions of dollars in research activity each year.



**Eduardo M. Sotomayor, MD**, is vice president and executive director of the cancer institute. Dr. Sotomayor

is a physician-scientist in cancer immunology and lymphoma research; former standing member of the National Cancer Institute (NCI), Subcommittee A; and a former member of AACI's Board of Directors. He was previously the director of GW Cancer Center.

By working with its primary care network across the Tampa Bay region and through its strong partnership with USF College of Nursing and its comprehensive community outreach and



engagement portfolio, the cancer institute is addressing unmet cancer care needs in its catchment area, with a particular focus in rural communities. Future goals for the cancer institute include NCI designation within its first decade.

## UMass Memorial Health (UMMH) Cancer Center



UMass Memorial Health (UMMH) Cancer Center joined the association in December. It is led by

**David Cachia, MD**, interim chief of Hematology Oncology Services and associate professor of neuro-oncology at the University of Massachusetts. The cancer center is comprised of four research programs: Cancer and Cell Biology, Cancer Genetics, Translational Oncology, and Cancer Population Health Sciences that span basic, translational, clinical, and population science. Partnering with the UMass Chan Medical School, the cancer center combines state-of-the-art technologies to diagnose, treat, and monitor cancers with compassionate care in a multispecialty, collaborative setting.



Approximately 88 percent of patients seen by UMMH Cancer Center in the past 10 years reside in the Central Massachusetts catchment area, which encompasses 8 counties, 104 zip codes, and 2.5 million people who mirror the state's racial and ethnic makeup. UMMH Cancer Center is committed to providing exceptional patient care while conducting cutting-edge research at the highest level.

The cancer center is dedicated to fostering the next generation of cancer researchers, educators, clinicians, and physician-scientists through education and training for students and trainees at various career stages, particularly those from groups underrepresented in the biomedical sciences. Programs focus on fields including cancer genetics, hematology-oncology, screening and diagnosis, and population health science.



# Member Services & Education

## Surveys

AACI surveys are designed to gather critical insights, facilitate knowledge sharing, and enhance the collective impact of member cancer centers.

In 2026, through a partnership with Adminformatics, AACI will introduce a new survey tool to streamline data collection and allow members to view data summaries in real time.

### Surveys launched in 2025:

- Cancer Center Efficiencies Survey**

This survey is gathering input from cancer center leaders to identify operational processes and expenses—such as clinical trial workflows, contracting, feasibility, and care pathways—that could be streamlined to enhance efficiency. Results will be shared with membership in 2026.

- Clinical Trials Office (CTO) Benchmarking Survey**

AACI expanded the 2024 survey from 17 to 21 questions to capture additional insights into trial and staffing workloads, sponsor distribution, activation timelines, accruals, center analytic case volume, trial demographics, and financial support sources. An optional 11-question module on participant support programs was also included. Seventy-seven percent of AACI cancer centers completed the survey, which will be conducted annually.

- Compensation Survey**

Data from this survey present a comprehensive overview of executive compensation for top leaders across AACI cancer centers.

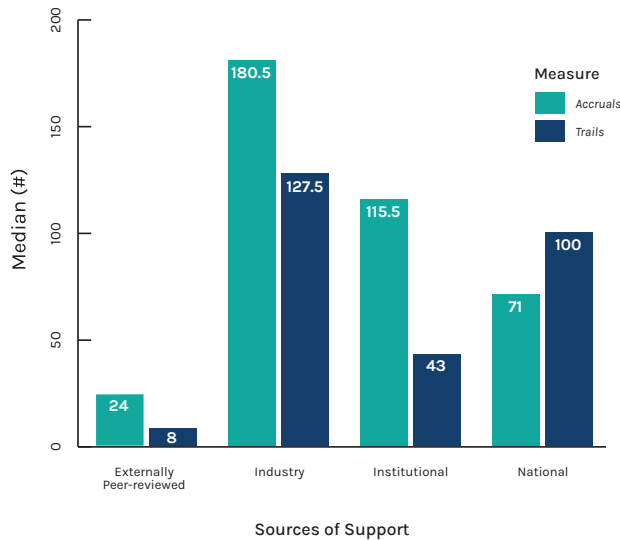
- CTI Non-malignant Clinical Trials Using IEC Therapy Survey**

AACI’s Cellular Therapy Initiative aims to assess how cancer centers support non-malignant immune effector cell (IEC) clinical trials, focusing on responsibility and management, staffing, and funding.

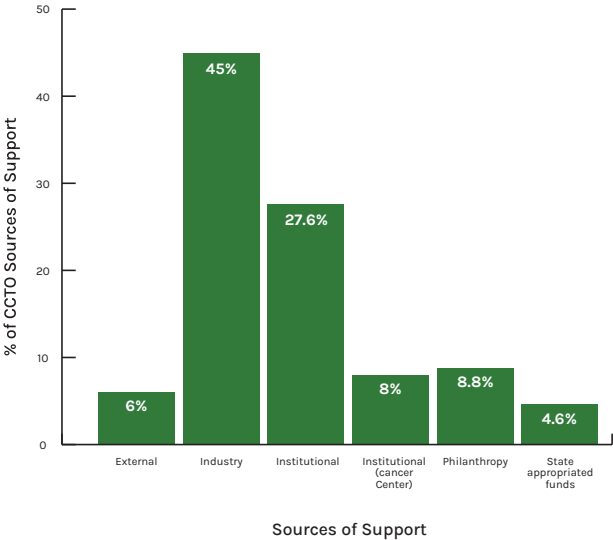


## Selected Data from the CTO Benchmarking Survey

CTO Budget Breakdown by Sources of Support



Median Active Interventional Treatment Trials vs. Accruals



# Member Services & Education

## Webinars

In 2025, AACI's webinars continued to deliver timely, expert-driven discussions that addressed emerging challenges and innovations across the cancer center community. These sessions strengthened cross-center collaboration and equipped members with practical strategies to enhance clinical operations and research.

As the year concluded, AACI launched a new partnership with Medlive—a leader in digital medical education—with a joint webinar; beginning in 2026, webinars will remain free to attend, with participants simply creating a complimentary Medlive account to register.

### CARDS Webinars Innovating Catchment Area Communication for Cancer Centers

**Moderator:** Tesla DuBois, Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center at Jefferson  
**Presenters:** Dr. Leah Lambart, The University of Kansas Cancer Center, and Dr. Todd Burus, UK Markey Cancer Center

### Statistical Approaches to Bridging Gaps in Catchment Area Data

**Moderator:** Tesla DuBois, Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center at Jefferson  
**Presenters:** Dr. Dinesh Pal Mudaranthakam, The University of Kansas Cancer Center; and Dr. Jacob Oleson, University of Iowa, Department of Biostatistics



## PCLI Webinars

### Resilient Paths: Navigating Research Careers in Uncertain Times

**Moderator:** Dr. Bhavana Bhatnagar, WVU Cancer Institute  
**Presenters:** Dr. Randall Kimple, University of Wisconsin Carbone Cancer Center; Dr. Lily Gutnik, O'Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center at the University of Alabama at Birmingham; and Dr. Arsen Osipov, Cedars-Sinai Cancer

### Healing Waves: How Hawai'i is Turning the Tide on Cancer Inequities

**Moderator:** Dr. Stephanie Lim, University of Hawai'i Cancer Center, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa  
**Presenters:** Dr. Neal A. Palafox, and Dr. Kevin Cassel, University of Hawai'i Cancer Center, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

### From Outreach to Action: Embedding Community Perspectives in Cancer Research

**Moderator:** Nicole Simone, MD, Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center at Jefferson  
**Presenters:** Dr. Amy E. Leader, Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center at Jefferson; Dr. Jin Sun Bitar, Cedars-Sinai Cancer; and Dr. Silvia Byer, The University of Kansas Cancer Center PIVOT Program

### Partners in Progress: Engaging Patient Advocates in Research and Clinical Trials

**Moderator:** Dr. Lee Wilke, University of Wisconsin Carbone Cancer Center  
**Presenters:** Mary Pat Berry, University of Wisconsin Carbone Cancer Center; Dr. Jane Perlmutter, Gemini Group; and Patty Spears, UNC Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill



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## Listservs

AACI listservs allow members to network with peers and pose questions about specific topics or roles. Roundtable meetings, webinars, and other projects have been developed from robust listserv discussions.

Listservs are for AACI members only. Subscribers must have a cancer center email address to join.

### **Associate Directors for Clinical Research (ADCR)**

Like the clinical trials office (CTO) medical and administrative director listservs, this listserv offers a platform for ADCRs to network, mentor, and openly discuss their roles. Only ADCRs may join (typically, one from each center).

### **Catchment Area Research Data Science (CARDS)**

This listserv provides a forum for members to make announcements and seek collaboration on topics related to catchment area research and data science.

### **Clinical Research Innovation (CRI)**

The CRI listserv is AACI's largest and most active listserv, with more than 1,200 members from 90 AACI cancer centers. It is a valuable resource for all CTO staff to discuss best practices for clinical research.

### **CTO Medical Directors**

This role-based listserv provides a forum for CTO medical directors, creating opportunities for members to mentor other medical directors. Only CTO medical directors or those with a similar job title may join (typically, one from each center), but exceptions can be made at AACI's discretion.

### **CTO Administrative Directors**

This listserv allows CTO administrative directors to share best practices and benefit from mentorship. Up to three CTO administrative directors from each cancer center may join. Additional cancer center subscriptions may be requested.

### **Clinical Trials Reporting Program (CTRP) Administrators**

This listserv facilitates discussions among CTRP administrators or similarly titled positions at various institutions.

### **Community Outreach and Engagement (COE)**

Members frequently share webinars, seminars, and in-person events that support various aspects of COE within their cancer centers' catchment areas.

### **Multicenter Investigator Initiated Trials (MIIT)**

New in 2025, this listserv provides a forum for MIIT staff to share their models, templates, and challenges. Members can ask questions and collaborate to solve common problems.

### **PRM/DSM Committees**

Discussions focus on Protocol Review and Monitoring (PRM) and Data and Safety Monitoring (DSM) topics, such as structure, benchmarking, and responsibilities related to the role of these committees within cancer center research departments.

## Stay connected between meetings: Join the AACI listservs to continue conversations year-round.



# Programs & Initiatives



Past and present CRI Steering Committee leaders (L-R): Drs. Margaret Kasner, Thomas J. George, Jr., Tara Lin, Theresa L. Werner and Carrie Lee.

AACI's initiatives and programs provide platforms for advancing the objectives of cancer centers and offer numerous opportunities for interactions with AACI and among cancer center leaders and staff.

## Clinical Research Innovation

Cancer clinical trials play a crucial role in prevention, early detection, treatment, and, ultimately, cancer cures. Recognizing that clinical trials in the U.S. face administrative and staffing barriers, regulatory constraints, increasing costs, and lagging patient accrual, AACI established the Clinical Research Initiative (CRI) in 2009, later renaming the program Clinical Research Innovation.

## NEW PROJECTS IN 2025

### Artificial Intelligence (AI) Task Force

Launched in November, the AI Task Force examines how sites can responsibly and effectively integrate artificial intelligence into clinical trials, operations, and patient care. The task force will meet monthly, focusing on topics like governance, implementation barriers, and operational and workflow realities.

### Trial Activation Working Group

This working group was formed to identify the top three challenges that cancer centers face when activating clinical trials, initially focusing on pre-activation protocol amendments. Data from a short survey are being evaluated to identify ways that corporate partners can work together to speed up trial enrollment.

### Unused Lab Kit Supplies Task Force

This group is developing unused lab kit supply disposal policies and drafting recommendations for use across sites to increase sustainability and reduce waste.

## CURRENT PROJECTS

### CTO Benchmarking Working Group

In 2025, the working group continued to analyze results from its 2024 survey, reporting high-level findings at the 17th Annual Clinical Research Innovation (CRI) Meeting and sharing them with survey respondents. A revised survey will be distributed in 2026 to collect 2025 data.

### Clinical Trials Management System Task Force

This task force meets quarterly to provide updates among members about changes and upgrades to the OnCore platform, as well as challenges and solutions related to the transition to cloud-based storage.

### CTO Medical Directors Forum, CTO Administrative Directors Forum, and Associate Directors of Clinical Research Forum

The CTO administrative and medical directors continue to hold roundtables every other month and hold joint discussions quarterly. The Associate Directors of Clinical Research Forum meets quarterly.

Corporate Roundtable Stipends and Reimbursement Task Force members continued meeting with the Equitable Access to Clinical Trials (EACT) project, adding optional questions to the CTO benchmarking survey to collect data on programs and resources, available through cancer centers, that make funding available to patients to cover trial-related expenses. A new publication, *Best Practices Guide for Clinical Trial Site Personnel*, which includes the survey data, was shared on AACI listservs and at the 2025 AACI/CCAF Annual Meeting.



## AACI Financial Disclosures and Conflict Management Task Force

The task force is using survey data to develop a template for centers to use when declaring financial disclosures.

## Protocol Review and Monitoring (PRM) and Data and Safety Monitoring (DSM) committees

More than 60 participants joined discussions every other month regarding clinical trial site challenges.

## Physician Clinical Leadership Initiative (PCLI)

PCLI's 13th annual meeting, held during the AACI/CCAF annual meeting, featured a panel discussion on protected academic time, highlighting preliminary results from a survey conducted by the PCLI Steering Committee. The session was moderated by **Dr. Karen Reckamp**, with panelists **Drs. Randall Holcombe, Thomas J. George, Jr., Gail Eckhardt, and Claire Verschraegen** (see photo below).

In September, the steering committee published "Benchmarking the Current Landscape: Insights from an Association of American Cancer Institutes Survey on Academic Cancer Service Lines," in *JCO Oncology Practice*. **Drs. Karen L. Reckamp, Carrie Lee, Paula Fracasso, Nicole Simone, and Thomas J. George** revised the 2018 AACI Protected Time Survey and are finalizing the manuscript for publication.

## Cellular Therapy Initiative (CTI)

The CTI Steering Committee developed and shared the 2025 Non-malignant Clinical Trials Using IEC Therapy Survey with AACI's membership. A manuscript is being drafted for publication.

The CTI steering committee collaborated with Medlive to produce two CME-accredited educational programs in 2025 on CAR T-cell therapy. The steering committee continues to partner with the Association of Community Cancer Centers (ACCC) and the American Society for Transplantation and Cellular Therapy (ASTCT) on projects and publications.

## 2025 AACI CRI Virtual Roundtables:

- **Training & Onboarding in Clinical Research:** This two-part series provided effective training methods and onboarding strategies for new research staff.
- **IgniteData | EHR to EDC:** AACI Tech Gold Member IgniteData partnered with AACI cancer centers to highlight EHR-to-EDC integration through their platform.
- **Disease Group Tokens:** Members shared approaches to disease group tokens, including on-ramp/lane systems, activation capacity alignment, and trial allocation models.
- **Clinical Trial Software Matching:** Centers discussed tools and systems used to match patients to clinical trials.
- **Unused Lab Kit Supplies:** Centers exchanged sustainable lab kit disposal practices, leading to an AACI task force and membership-wide recommendations.

**Cancer clinical trials play a crucial role in prevention, early detection, treatment, and, ultimately, cancer cures.**



# Supporters



“Overall we are **HUGE** supporters of AACI and are so grateful for our partnership. The staff is fantastic and we plan to be sponsors for a long, long time.”

— IgniteData

The 2025 AACI/CCAF Annual Meeting and the 17th Annual AACI Clinical Research Innovation (CRI) Meeting provided opportunities for supporters to interact with AACI members and representatives from cancer research-related organizations.

Supporters and exhibitors promoted their products and services to hundreds of meeting attendees including cancer center directors, executive administrators, and leaders of clinics, laboratories, and specialized research facilities.

**AACI received support in 2025 for its events and programs from:**

- AbbVie
- Actalent
- Adminformatics
- Advarra
- American Society of Clinical Oncology
- Astellas
- AstraZeneca
- BeOne
- Bristol Myers Squibb
- Caris Life Sciences
- Cognizant
- Flatiron
- Florence Healthcare
- Genentech
- Gilead
- Hollings Cancer Center, Medical University of South Carolina
- Huron Consulting Group
- IgniteData
- InfoReady
- Inspirata
- J & J Innovative Medicine
- Kite – a Gilead Company
- LeanTaaS
- Lilly
- Medidata
- Merck
- Moffitt Cancer Center
- Natera
- nCartes/nCoup
- Novartis
- Paradigm
- Pfizer
- Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center at Jefferson

- Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center, UT Southwestern Medical Center
- The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center - The James
- Triomics
- UK Markey Cancer Center
- Varian Medical Systems
- VCU Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center
- Veeva Systems
- Verily Life Sciences
- WCG
- Yunu, Inc.

**Exhibitors at the 17th Annual AACI CRI Meeting**

- Actalent
- Advarra
- AstraZeneca
- Caris Life Sciences
- Florence
- Huron Consulting Group
- IgniteData
- Medidata
- nCartes/nCoup
- Veeva Systems
- Verily Life Sciences
- WCG
- Yunu, Inc.

**Exhibitors at the 2025 AACI/CCAF Annual Meeting**

- Adminformatics
- Advarra
- Caris Life Sciences
- Flatiron
- Huron Consulting Group
- IgniteData
- InfoReady
- LeanTaaS
- Merck
- Natera
- nCartes/nCoup
- Novartis
- VCU Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center
- Verily Life Sciences
- Yunu, Inc.

AACI appreciates the assistance these companies provide with fulfilling the association's mission of enhancing the impact of academic cancer centers.



## Corporate Roundtable

The AACI Corporate Roundtable provides a forum for AACI cancer centers to address topics of mutual interest with industry colleagues. Through the Corporate Roundtable, cancer centers interact directly with industry decision makers, generating support for new and ongoing AACI projects. Roundtable members met in June during the 17th Annual Clinical Research Innovation (CRI) Meeting and again in October at the 2025 AACI/CCAF Annual Meeting.

Discussions focused on topics such as clinical trial access; operational efficiencies; and partnerships to increase clinical trial access.

AACI extends its gratitude for the commitment and support of its 2025 Corporate Roundtable members:

**abbvie**

**Bristol Myers Squibb™**

**Genentech**  
A Member of the Roche Group

**GILEAD**

**Kite**

**Johnson & Johnson**

**Lilly**

**MERCK**

**PRMA**  
RESEARCH • PROGRESS • HOPE

## Tech Gold Members

Introduced in 2024, AACI's Tech Gold membership offers a platform for cancer centers and technology companies to imagine new possibilities for enhancing oncology through technology. By building important relationships with AACI cancer centers, Tech Gold members help accelerate progress against cancer, benefiting patients and their families.

**ADVARRA**

**CARIS**  
LIFE SCIENCES

**cognizant®**

**flatiron**

**IgniteData**

**yunu**

## Sustaining Members

Sustaining membership in AACI includes nonprofit organizations that represent and support the educational and professional development of clinical oncology health professionals and researchers. These like-minded cancer organizations and patient advocacy groups share a common goal of decreasing the national cancer burden. Sustaining members participate in AACI-sponsored meetings, workshops, and forums and meet annually with AACI leadership.

**AACR** American Association for Cancer Research

**American Cancer Society**

**ASCO®**

**HOPA**  
Hematology/Oncology Pharmacy Association

**sitc**

Society for Immunotherapy of Cancer



# New Leadership



Above, AACI's new president, Dr. Joann B. Sweasy; at right, President-elect Dr. Cornelia Ulrich.

## AACI President

AACI's new president is **Dr. Joann B. Sweasy**, director of the Fred & Pamela Buffett Cancer Center at the University of Nebraska and the Eppley Institute for Research in Cancer and Allied Diseases. She succeeds **Dr. Robert A. Winn**, director of VCU Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center, and officially began her two-year term at the close of the 2025 AACI/CCAF Annual Meeting in October.

Dr. Sweasy was appointed to AACI's board in 2021. From 2020-2023, she served as director of the University of Arizona Cancer Center and previously was a member of the Yale Cancer Center for 26 years. During her Yale career, Dr. Sweasy rose from assistant professor to the Ensign Professor of Therapeutic Radiology. She also served as the associate director of basic sciences and as co-leader of the Radiobiology and Radiotherapy Program at Yale.

Dr. Sweasy is an internationally recognized expert in the genetics, cell biology, and biochemistry of DNA repair. She is well-known across the National Cancer Institute (NCI) community for her distinguished work and collaborations with colleagues in peer NCI-Designated Cancer Centers. Dr. Sweasy has extensive experience as an NCI reviewer and has served as a member of NCI Subcommittee A since 2017.

## AACI President-elect

**Dr. Cornelia Ulrich** has been elected to serve as vice president/president-elect of AACI's Board of Directors. She is chief scientific officer and executive director of the Comprehensive Cancer Center at Huntsman Cancer Institute at the University of Utah.

Dr. Ulrich is the Jon M. and Karen Huntsman Presidential Professor in Cancer Research in the Department of Population Health Sciences at the University of Utah. As chief scientific officer and cancer center executive director, she oversees Huntsman Cancer Institute's academic consortium of more than 300 cancer research teams. She is a cancer epidemiologist whose research focuses on lifestyle and biologic factors in cancer prevention and cancer prognosis. Dr. Ulrich has served on numerous advisory committees and in leadership roles, including AACI's Board of Directors (2021-2023) and Inclusive Excellence Steering Committee, and as chair of AACI's 2022 AACI/CCAF Annual Meeting Program Committee.



# New Board Members

## AACI Board Welcomes Two Cancer Center Leaders

**Drs. Diane M. Simeone** and **Barry P. Sleckman** were elected to AACI's board in 2025. They will replace outgoing board members.



*Dr. Diane M. Simeone*

Dr. Simeone is the director of UC San Diego Moores Cancer Center. She provides the overall strategic and intellectual direction for the center's research programs, administrative structure, and multidisciplinary cancer clinical care. Prior to her current role, Dr. Simeone was the associate director of translational research at Laura and Isaac Perlmutter Cancer Center at NYU Langone Health.



*Dr. Barry P. Sleckman*

Dr. Sleckman is director of the O'Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. His research focuses on understanding how DNA double strand breaks are generated and repaired. Dr. Sleckman moved to UAB in January 2020 from Weill Cornell Medicine, where he served as an associate director of the Meyer Cancer Center. Dr. Sleckman served on the 2024 AACI/CCAF Annual Meeting Program Committee and played a key role in a 2025 U.S. Senate appropriations committee hearing, testifying on behalf of UAB about the benefits of federal investment in cancer research.

## Outgoing Board Members

AACI extends its deep appreciation to **Dr. Caryn Lerman**, immediate past president, and to **Drs. Steven D. Leach** and **Kunle Odunsi** for their service to AACI. Beyond their roles as board members, each has made significant contributions to AACI's growth and value to its members.



*Dr. Caryn Lerman*

Dr. Lerman joined the board in 2019 and served as AACI president from 2021-2023.

As part of her AACI presidential initiative, Dr.

Lerman, director of USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center, launched the popular AACI Leadership Development Workshop. She and members of her presidential initiative steering committee also authored a published report, "Leadership Diversity and Development in the Nation's Cancer Centers," in the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*, in 2022.



*Dr. Steven D. Leach*

Dr. Leach, former director of Dartmouth Cancer Center, was the 2020 AACI/CCAF Program Committee chair, and Dr. Odunsi, director of The University of Chicago Medicine Comprehensive Cancer Center, was an inaugural member of AACI's Cellular Therapy Initiative Steering Committee



*Dr. Kunle Odunsi*

and served on the Leadership Development committee.

# Communications & Publications



AACI's 2025 communications focused on policy decisions that impact cancer centers and patients, with numerous press releases, statements, and social media posts highlighting the value of federal investment in the National Institutes of Health and National Cancer Institute.

To expand awareness of the very real benefits of federally funded research, AACI launched its *Defending Cancer Research* digest in March, with nine issues published in 2025. The digest includes stories from around the country about ways that patients, advocates and cancer center leaders are speaking out on behalf of cancer research.

AACI shared these and other stories about the value of cancer research on social media with the hashtag #DefendingCancerResearch.

Also in 2025, AACI expanded its social media footprint and increased activity on YouTube, featuring videos from meetings, conferences, and webinars, as well as interviews with cancer research advocates.

These new efforts complemented our long-standing monthly newsletter, *AACI Update*, and *AACI Commentary*, an editorial platform for cancer center leaders and subject matter experts. Both publications are emailed to more than 7,000 readers and are posted on AACI's website.

In 2025, the *AACI Commentary* highlighted patient advocacy, oncology workforce and leadership training, and of course, the desperate need for sustained and sufficient federal funding for cancer research.

## Cancer research isn't a budget line item. It's a lifeline.

By Courtney Bugler, Anjee Davis, MPPA, Andrea Ferris, Julie Fleshman, JD, MBA, Jennifer W. Pegher, MA, MBA and Victoria Wolodzko Smart



AACI published a special edition of the *Commentary* in September, co-authored by AACI Executive Director **Jennifer W. Pegher** and the leaders of **Fight Colorectal Cancer**, **LUNGEVITY Foundation**, **Pancreatic**

**Cancer Action Network**, **Susan G. Komen**, and **ZERO Prostate Cancer**. The editorial described the devastating impact of budget cuts on cancer research and the patients whose lives depend on it.



# IN MEMORIAM

## Selected AACI Statements on Federal Funding Crisis in 2025

**Federal Funding Freeze**  
**JANUARY 28**

**Indirect Cost Rates**  
**FEBRUARY 8**

**Mass Firings at Government  
Health Agencies**  
**FEBRUARY 19**

**Widespread Termination of  
Federal Funding**  
**MARCH 17**

**Urging Secretary Kennedy, HHS  
to Protect Federal Funding for  
Cancer Research**  
**MARCH 20**

**Continued Reductions in Force**  
**MARCH 28**

**Proposed Cuts to NIH Budget**  
**MAY 2**

**Proposed Federal Budget Cuts  
for Cancer Research**  
**JUNE 1**

**Republican Senators' Advocacy  
for NIH Funding**  
**JULY 29**

**Senate Appropriations  
Committee Budget**  
**AUGUST 4**

**Impact of Government Shutdown  
on People with Cancer**  
**NOVEMBER 6**



### **Edward Chu, MD, MMS**

*December 19, 1958 – November 13, 2025*

Montefiore Einstein Comprehensive Cancer Center (MECCC) Director Dr. Edward “Ed” Chu died in November of glioblastoma. He was an expert in pharmacology, performing research that improved therapies for colorectal cancer, leading to the identification of new treatment targets and driving scientific advances in the field.

Dr. Chu was elected to the AACI Board of Directors in 2023 and was deeply committed to AACI’s mission and purpose, serving on the board with exceptional dedication, insight, and integrity.

He had a distinguished career as a physician-scientist, holding tenured positions and leadership roles at Yale School of Medicine and Yale Cancer Center, and University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, where he was chief of hematology-oncology and deputy director of the UPMC Hillman Cancer Center.

Dr. Chu joined MECCC in the fall of 2020. During his tenure, he transformed the cancer center into a fully integrated, unified cancer enterprise, resulting in its first comprehensive designation from the National Cancer Institute. In addition to his role as director of MECCC, Dr. Chu was vice president of cancer medicine and the Carol and Roger Einiger Professor of Cancer Medicine, and he acted as interim chair of the department of oncology until 2024.



### **Julie Brabbs, MBA**

*April 1, 1967 – May 21, 2025*

Revered by colleagues for her inspiring leadership, Julie Brabbs joined the University of Michigan Rogel Cancer Center as chief administrative officer in 2016. She began her career at Pfizer before spending 17 years at the University of Michigan.

Julie wore multiple hats for AACI in recent years. She was appointed to AACI’s Clinical Research Innovation steering committee in 2022 and served on the Finance and Investment Committee, the planning committee for the DEI Summit in 2024, and as a panelist and moderator at AACI meetings. She was also a member of the Board of Directors for the Association for Cancer Center Administrators, playing a key role in that group’s transition to an incorporated, national organization.

Julie was pivotal in shaping cancer administration both at Rogel and on a national level. She served an essential role in the successful renewals of two National Cancer Institute Cancer Center Support Grants. In the center’s 2022 review, Rogel’s administrative component, under her direction, received an exceptional rating — the highest possible.

# 2025 Committees

## 2025 AACI/CCAF ANNUAL MEETING PROGRAM COMMITTEE

**Chair: Ruben A. Mesa, MD, FACP**  
Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist  
Comprehensive Cancer Center

**Rohit Bhargava, PhD**  
Cancer Center at Illinois

**Roxana S. Dronca, MD**  
Mayo Clinic  
Comprehensive Cancer Center, Florida

**Melanie Funes, PhD**  
UCI Chao Family  
Comprehensive Cancer Center

**Becky Gibson**  
Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center  
UT Southwestern Medical Center

**Max Loveless, MBA**  
Huntsman Cancer Institute at the  
University of Utah

**Taofeek K. Owonikoko, MD, PhD, MSCR**  
University of Maryland  
Marlene and Stewart Greenebaum  
Comprehensive Cancer Center

**Jennifer W. Pegher, MA, MBA**  
Association of American Cancer Institutes

## CATCHMENT AREA DATA EXCELLENCE (CADEX) CONFERENCE PLANNING COMMITTEE

**Chair: Dinesh Pal Mudaranthakam, PhD, MBA, MS**  
The University of Kansas Cancer Center

**Kelly D. Blake, ScD**  
WVU Cancer Institute

**Todd Burus, PhD**  
UK Markey Cancer Center

**Pete DelNero, PhD, MPH**  
UAMS Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute

**Carmen E. Guerra, MD, MSCE, FACP**  
Abramson Cancer Center of the University of  
Pennsylvania

**Lauren E. Hackett, MPA**  
Montefiore Einstein Comprehensive Cancer Center

**Namoonga Mantina, PhD, MSPH, MBA**  
The University of Arizona Cancer Center

**Christopher McNair, PhD**  
Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center at  
Jefferson

**Debby Oh, MSc, PhD**  
UCSF Helen Diller Comprehensive Cancer Center

**Tracy Onega, PhD, MA, MPAS, MS**  
Huntsman Cancer Institute at the University of Utah

**Sandi L. Pruitt, PhD**  
Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center  
UT Southwestern Medical Center

**Shayla J. Scarlett, MBA, MPA, DipACLM**  
GW Cancer Center

**Katherine Y. Tossas, PhD, MS**  
VCU Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center

## CELLULAR THERAPY INITIATIVE (CTI) STEERING COMMITTEE

**Chair: Peter Riedell, MD**  
The University of Chicago Medicine  
Comprehensive Cancer Center

**Lihua Elizabeth Budde, MD, PhD**  
City of Hope Comprehensive Cancer Center

**Natalie Grover, MD**  
UNC Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

**Michael E. Hurwitz, MD, PhD**  
Yale Cancer Center  
Yale School of Medicine

**Frederick L. Locke, MD**  
Moffitt Cancer Center

**Premal Lulla, MD**  
Dan L Duncan Comprehensive Cancer Center at  
Baylor College of Medicine

**Barbara Ma, MD, MS**  
Sanda and Edward Meyer Cancer Center at  
Weill Cornell Medicine

**Joseph McGuirk, DO, FACP**  
The University of Kansas Cancer Center

**Sapna Parshottam, BSc, MSc**  
The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center

**Miguel-Angel Perales, MD**  
Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

**David L. Porter, MD**  
Abramson Cancer Center of the  
University of Pennsylvania

**Craig Sauter, MD**  
Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

**Erin Winters, BSN, RN, BMTCN**  
The University of Kansas Cancer Center

## CLINICAL RESEARCH INNOVATION (CRI) STEERING COMMITTEE

**Chair: Thomas J. George, MD, FACP, FASCO**  
UF Health Cancer Institute

**Chair-elect: Margaret “Margie” Kasner, MD, MSCE**  
Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center at  
Jefferson

**Dina Aziz, MSHS**  
The University of Texas MD Anderson  
Cancer Center

**Sarah Bigelow, CCRP**  
Tulane Cancer Center, Louisiana Cancer Research Center

**Frances Brogan, MSN, RN, OCN, CCRP**  
Herbert Irving Comprehensive Cancer Center  
Columbia University Irving Medical Center

**Angela Campbell, MS**  
The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center  
- The James

**Mario Contreras, MBA, MSN, RN**  
Indiana University Melvin and Bren Simon  
Comprehensive Cancer Center

**Arcadia Cruz, PhD**  
UC San Diego Moores Cancer Center

**Angela Fritzsche, MPA**  
Mayo Clinic Comprehensive Cancer Center

**Muhammad Furqan, MBBS**  
Holden Comprehensive Cancer Center  
University of Iowa

**Edward J. Kim, MD, PhD**  
UC Davis Comprehensive Cancer Center

**Wendy Law, PhD**  
Fred Hutch Cancer Center

**Jay Lebsack**  
Moffitt Cancer Center

**Jennifer W. Pegher, MA, MBA**  
Association of American Cancer Institutes

**Jennifer F. Rogers, MBA**  
UK Markey Cancer Center

**Lauren Wall, MS**  
The University of Chicago Medicine  
Comprehensive Cancer Center

## CRI CTO BENCHMARKING WORKING GROUP

**Chair: Thomas J. George, MD, FACP, FASCO**  
UF Health Cancer Institute

**Dina Aziz, MSHS**  
The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center

**Stefanie Belanger, MHA, CCRP**  
Duke Cancer Institute

**Frances Brogan, MSN, RN, OCN, CCRP**  
Herbert Irving Comprehensive Cancer Center  
Columbia University Irving Medical Center

**Angela Campbell, MS**  
The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center  
- The James

**Angela Fritzsche, MPA**  
Mayo Clinic Comprehensive Cancer Center

**Margaret “Margie” Kasner, MD, MSCE**  
Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center at  
Jefferson

**Jay Lebsack**  
Moffitt Cancer Center

**Henry Leong, PhD**  
UF Health Cancer Institute

## CRI FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT TASK FORCE

**Chair: Therica Miller, MBA, CCRP**  
Mount Sinai Tisch Cancer Center

**Zeno Ashai, MBBS MPH**  
USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center

**Carrie Hansen**  
The University of Chicago Medicine  
Comprehensive Cancer Center

**Reina Hibbert, CCRC**  
Fred Hutch Cancer Center

**Alison Ivey, MBA, MS, RN, BSN, OCN, CCRP**  
UF Health Cancer Institute

**Kelly Kyle**  
Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center  
UT Southwestern Medical Center

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**Erica Orcholski, MPA, CCRP**  
Masonic Cancer Center, University of Minnesota

**Lina Sego, CCRP**  
Indiana University Melvin and Bren Simon  
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USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center

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**Cindy Wynne-Jones**

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UT Southwestern Medical Center

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UC San Diego Moores Cancer Center

**Kira Pavlik, MPH, CCRP**

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UPMC Hillman Cancer Center

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Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center  
UT Southwestern Medical Center

**Katrina Williams, BS, CCRC**

Children's Mercy Hospital Kansas City

# 2025 Members

## UNITED STATES

### ALABAMA

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Birmingham, Alabama

### ARIZONA

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Scottsdale, Arizona

**The University of Arizona Cancer Center**  
Tucson, Arizona

### ARKANSAS

**UAMS Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute**  
Little Rock, Arkansas

### CALIFORNIA

**Cedars-Sinai Cancer**  
Los Angeles, California

**City of Hope Comprehensive Cancer Center**  
Duarte, California

**Loma Linda University Cancer Center**  
Loma Linda, California

**Salk Institute Cancer Center**  
La Jolla, California

**Sanford Burnham Preby's Medical Discovery Institute**  
La Jolla, California

**Stanford Cancer Institute**  
Palo Alto, California

**UC Davis Comprehensive Cancer Center**  
Sacramento, California

**UC San Diego Moores Cancer Center**  
La Jolla, California

**UCI Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center**  
Orange, California

**UCLA Jonsson Comprehensive Cancer Center**  
Los Angeles, California

**UCSF Helen Diller Family Comprehensive Cancer Center**  
San Francisco, California

**USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center**  
Los Angeles, California

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**University of Colorado Cancer Center**  
Aurora, Colorado

### CONNECTICUT

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Washington, District of Columbia

**GW Cancer Center**  
Washington, District of Columbia

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Jacksonville, Florida

**Moffitt Cancer Center**  
Tampa, Florida

**Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center University of Miami**  
Miami, Florida

**Tampa General Hospital Cancer Institute**  
Tampa, Florida

**UF Health Cancer Institute**  
Gainesville, Florida

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Augusta, Georgia

**Winship Cancer Institute of Emory University**  
Atlanta, Georgia

### HAWAII

**University of Hawai'i Cancer Center University of Hawai'i at Mānoa**  
Honolulu, Hawai'i

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**Cancer Center at Illinois**  
Urbana, Illinois

**Cardinal Bernardin Cancer Center Loyola University of Chicago**  
Maywood, Illinois

**Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center of Northwestern University**  
Chicago, Illinois

**The University of Chicago Medicine Comprehensive Cancer Center**  
Chicago, Illinois

**University of Illinois Cancer Center**  
Chicago, Illinois

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**Indiana University Melvin and Bren Simon Comprehensive Cancer Center**  
Indianapolis, Indiana

**Purdue University Institute for Cancer Research**  
West Lafayette, Indiana

### IOWA

**Holden Comprehensive Cancer Center University of Iowa**  
Iowa City, Iowa

### KANSAS

**The University of Kansas Cancer Center**  
Kansas City, Kansas

### KENTUCKY

**UK Markey Cancer Center**  
Lexington, Kentucky

**UofL James Graham Brown Cancer Center**  
Louisville, Kentucky

### LOUISIANA

**Louisiana Cancer Research Center**  
New Orleans, Louisiana

**LSU LCMC Health Cancer Center**  
New Orleans, Louisiana

### MAINE

**The Jackson Laboratory Cancer Center**  
Bar Harbor, Maine

### MARYLAND

**Murtha Cancer Center at Walter Reed Bethesda**  
Bethesda, Maryland

**Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center at Johns Hopkins University**  
Baltimore, Maryland

**University of Maryland Marlene and Stewart Greenebaum Comprehensive Cancer Center**  
Baltimore, Maryland

### MASSACHUSETTS

**Boston University Cancer Center**  
Boston, Massachusetts

**Dana-Farber Cancer Institute Harvard Medical School**  
Boston, Massachusetts

**Koch Institute for Integrative Cancer Research at MIT**  
Cambridge, Massachusetts

**UMass Memorial Health Cancer Center**  
Worcester, Massachusetts

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Detroit, Michigan

**University of Michigan Rogel Cancer Center**  
Ann Arbor, Michigan

### MINNESOTA

**Masonic Cancer Center University of Minnesota**  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

**Mayo Clinic Comprehensive Cancer Center**  
Rochester, Minnesota

### MISSISSIPPI

**UMMC Cancer Center and Research Institute**  
Jackson, Mississippi

### MISSOURI

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Columbia, Missouri

**Siteman Cancer Center**  
St. Louis, Missouri

### NEBRASKA

**Fred & Pamela Buffett Cancer Center**  
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## NEW HAMPSHIRE

### Dartmouth Cancer Center

Lebanon, New Hampshire

## NEW JERSEY

### Rutgers Cancer Institute

New Brunswick, New Jersey

## NEW MEXICO

### University of New Mexico Comprehensive Cancer Center

Albuquerque, New Mexico

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### Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Cancer Center

Cold Spring Harbor, New York

### Herbert Irving Comprehensive Cancer Center Columbia University Irving Medical Center

New York, New York

### Laura and Isaac Perlmutter Cancer Center at NYU Langone Health

New York, New York

### Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

New York, New York

### Montefiore Einstein Comprehensive Cancer Center

Bronx, New York

### Mount Sinai Tisch Cancer Center

New York, New York

### Northwell Health Cancer Institute

Lake Success, New York

### Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center

Buffalo, New York

### Sandra and Edward Meyer Cancer Center at Weill Cornell Medicine

New York, New York

### Stony Brook Cancer Center

Stony Brook, New York

### Upstate Cancer Center SUNY Upstate Medical University

Syracuse, New York

### Wilmot Cancer Institute, UR Medicine

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## NORTH CAROLINA

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### Duke Cancer Institute

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### UNC Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Chapel Hill, North Carolina

## OHIO

### Case Comprehensive Cancer Center

Cleveland, Ohio

### Cleveland Clinic Cancer Center

Cleveland, Ohio

### The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center - James Cancer Hospital and Solove Research Institute

Columbus, Ohio

### University of Cincinnati Cancer Center

Cincinnati, Ohio

## OKLAHOMA

### Stephenson Cancer Center University of Oklahoma

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

## OREGON

### OHSU Knight Cancer Institute

Portland, Oregon

## PENNSYLVANIA

### Abramson Cancer Center of the University of Pennsylvania

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

### Ellen and Ronald Caplan Cancer Center of The Wistar Institute

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

### Fox Chase Cancer Center, Temple Health

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

### Penn State Cancer Institute

Hershey, Pennsylvania

### Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center at Jefferson

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

### UPMC Hillman Cancer Center

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## PUERTO RICO

### University of Puerto Rico Comprehensive Cancer Center

San Juan, Puerto Rico

## RHODE ISLAND

### Legorreta Cancer Center at Brown University

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## SOUTH CAROLINA

### Hollings Cancer Center Medical University of South Carolina

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## TENNESSEE

### Comprehensive Cancer Center St. Jude Children's Research Hospital

Memphis, Tennessee

### Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center

Nashville, Tennessee

## TEXAS

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Houston, Texas

### Houston Methodist Dr. Mary and Ron Neal Cancer Center

Houston, Texas

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### Mays Cancer Center at UT Health San Antonio MD Anderson

San Antonio, Texas

### Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center UT Southwestern Medical Center

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### The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center

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### University of Texas Medical Branch Cancer Center

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## UTAH

### Huntsman Cancer Institute at the University of Utah

Salt Lake City, Utah

## VERMONT

### The University of Vermont Cancer Center

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## VIRGINIA

### University of Virginia Cancer Center

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## WASHINGTON

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## WEST VIRGINIA

### WVU Cancer Institute

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### Medical College of Wisconsin Cancer Center

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

### University of Wisconsin Carbone Cancer Center

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## CANADA

## BRITISH COLUMBIA

### BC Cancer

Vancouver, British Columbia

## ONTARIO

### Princess Margaret Cancer Centre University Health Network

Toronto, Ontario



Pittsburgh, PA  
[www.aaci-cancer.org](http://www.aaci-cancer.org)

